

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #144: Urge and Desire Expectations

Hello! Let's jump right in.

Today I'm talking about what you can expect with your urges and desires as you move from on from binge eating.

In the beginning of my group program and really throughout the whole thing, we talk about goals, what my group members want to achieve, and within that, what kinds of behaviors they want to have and what they want their thought patterns and habits to be like once they're stopped binge eating.

For the most part, in my opinion, what they want is absolutely achievable.

But sometimes, they tell me things that seem, well, kind of not human.

What I mean by that is really, perfect.

They want perfect eating, perfect thinking, perfect feelings.

They don't explain it as being perfect but the words that do show up are “never” and “always.”

For example, they might say, “I want to always follow my plan.” Or “I want to never feel desire to overeat.”

They sound like reasonable wants, especially after dealing with binge eating and feeling out of control around food and battling your weight for so long.

You want to have the opposite, to be in full control of everything involving food and eating and to have it be easy and require zero effort.

To just be a clean-eating machine.

And that's literally what you'd be if you were that way – a machine.

Humans are imperfect, and we don't always think and feel the way we want to, and that also means we'll make mistakes sometimes, no matter how much we plan and manage our thinking and no matter how much we practice.

And we'll be so much more content with ourselves if we expect ourselves to be imperfect and if we expect our brains to think differently than we want them to sometimes.

I think one of the most common unrealistic expectations that I hear from people is that they want to have zero desire to overeat or eat when they're not hungry or zero desire to eat off their plan.

They never want to feel urges to eat when they're not hungry.

Now, this is different from binge urges. There's the urge to eat a lot of food, quickly, and to keep going well past fullness, even if you're feeling way too full, and then there's the urge to eat a different meal than you planned, to eat an extra snack, to have a second serving, to eat a few extra bites.

I believe that people can eliminate their desire to binge eat. I personally don't experience any desire for it, even after binge eating for about 10 years.

Never do I feel urges to binge, or envision myself going to the store, buying multiple foods with the intention of eating all of them at one time like I used to.

But do I still feel urges to overeat or to eat an extra joy food? Yes, although I wouldn't describe it most of the time as an urge, but more like a desire. Now, I consider urges to be desires but they're urgent desires, so what I usually feel isn't as urgent or intense. But once in awhile, an urge to overeat may come up.

And this, I think, is normal. Maybe a very small percentage of people don't experience this, maybe, but I don't even know if that's true.

I actually asked about this in my coaching community recently to see if my theory holds up with other people.

I asked weight loss coaches and any other coaches who had done the mental and emotional work to lose weight if they still experienced desire to overeat and everyone who answered said yes.

They of course said more than just the word yes, which I'll get into in a moment but, they all still experience it and most likely, you will too.

I think it's important for you to expect this, and to see it as normal, because otherwise, you might end up setting yourself up for disappointment and frustration.

You might spend your mental energy and effort on something that's not attainable.

You might make your desire to overeat mean something about you, like you're a failure and you might beat yourself up for something that's completely normal.

I know so many of you want to complete your eating work so that you can move onto other things.

But I'm going to be honest with you here. The work doesn't end.

Now, like I said, the binge eating work can end. You can stop feeling urges to binge and to eat excessive amounts of food quickly and to eat until you feel sick.

But, feeling desire to overeat and eat when you're not hungry, for most people, will continue.

This is normal.

It's normal because our brains are wired to seek pleasure.

Pleasurable things keep us alive – drinking water when you're thirsty to stay hydrated, being clean and hygienic so you don't die of infection or disease, being warm so you don't freeze to death or being cool so you don't die from heat stroke, being adequately rested so you can be alert and react properly to danger or avoid accidents.

And food that keeps us fueled and alive, and especially joy food, is a source of pleasure so your brain is going to want it. It sees it as important for survival.

It's a pleasure you enjoy so your brain will suggest that you partake in it.

It's normal to want to eat a food you like when someone offers it to you.

It's normal to randomly think about a food you like and feel desire for it.

It's normal to be eating delicious food and want more of it.

But that doesn't mean you have to give in to every desire that you experience.

Just because you want it, doesn't mean you have to eat it.

And that's the work that continues on after you stop bingeing and that's what those coaches were saying beyond just yes. It's also the work I continue to do and that the people I've worked with continue to do once their bingeing has stopped.

The desire is still there but you learn how to manage it and you practice the skill of managing it so you stay good at it.

It's like a professional athlete. They don't just do well at their sport, get signed to a team, and expect to stay as good as they are. They practice to maintain their skills, and probably to improve.

Or if you're learning a language. You don't become fluent and then stop practicing it. If you want to continue to be fluent you practice speaking the language.

You don't just get good at allowing desire and urges to pass and then stop putting in any effort to be good at it.

You continue practicing what you want to be good at.

Then the more you practice, the easier it becomes to allow the urges and desire and say no to eating the foods from a place of self-love and respect for you body.

It's not a struggle and if you keep up with it, it can become pretty easy and natural but, it will still take some effort, just not as much as when you weren't practiced. You still have to actively allow the feeling and go through the process of allowing. It's just quicker and easier.

I get that you don't want to be tempted and you don't want to think about food when you don't want to be thinking about food but, it happens.

When you can accept this as just being how it is, you can welcome it when it does happen instead of getting upset about it and therefore adding negative emotions to the discomfort of the desire that you're already feeling.

Arguing with what's happening isn't going to stop it from happening. The desire is there. You can get mad about it or accept that it's there and do the work.

And the same goes for binge eating and allowing your binge urges.

And what's pretty cool is that after you practice allowing and not giving into binge urges for awhile, not giving in to the desire to overeat will be easier since those aren't as uncomfortable as the binge urges. Binge urges are usually more intense, at least that's what I've experienced.

Now when I feel desire to overeat it's much duller than binge urges and even if I do feel an urge to overeat it's still not what my binge urges were.

So, I say all this so you can create a realistic expectation for yourself when it comes to what life will be like for you after you are no longer bingeing so that when you're imagining your life and making the transition, you don't think you're doing something wrong.

When you're bingeing, you'll feel urges. When you're no longer binge eating, you'll still feel urges or at least, desire. But you're going to be so practiced at allowing them that it won't even be a problem.

For me, I don't think it's a problem. I just work through them and move on.

Not every thing in life is going to be what we want it to be. And that's okay. We can work through it all and get to the other side in one piece and without eating food to help us deal with it, which actually doesn't help us deal with it really.

Yes you have control over what you do, what you choose to put into your mouth but, you don't have full control over what thoughts pop into your head. Sometimes food thoughts are going to pop into your head and you're going to feel desire for those foods.

So let's let go of the idea that we're going to be perfect eaters and think perfectly and never feel urges or desire.

You're human and being imperfect and feeling desire for pleasure is normal.

Expect to be a normal human.

Alright, talk to you next time, bye bye.